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SUBJECT: MARCH 17 LETTER FROM PRESIDENT PORTILLO TO
PRESIDENT BUSH ON IRAQ

1. (U) President Alfonso Portillo sent President Bush a letter on March 17 (delivered by the Guatemalan Embassy in Washington to the White House and Department of State) saying that Guatemala stands by the United States during the current difficult international situation. Following is the Embassy's translation of the text of the Portillo letter:

2. (U) Begin text:
Guatemala, March 17, 2003
Mr. George W. Bush
President of the United States of America

Mr. President:

I have the honor to address you to express my solidarity (with you) during this difficult moment in the international situation. My government shares your concern over the persistence of international actors that represent a serious risk to international peace and security, as well as the need for the community of nations to act with determination to confront these risks.

Of those risks, the most virulent is terrorism, while so violently has attacked your country as well as many others in the world. All of the nations and peoples of the world have an obligation to act in concert to prevent, attack and, if possible, eradicate this threat.

At the same time, we remember the need to maintain the great achievements that humanity has gradually built over the past century, in particular, the multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, which are the best guarantee that we will continue to build a world founded on the values of democracy and peace.

Mr. President, permit me to repeat my desire that our nations conserve their friendship and shared visions for better societies.

(complimentary closing)
Alfonso Portillo (signed)
end text.

3. (SBU) Comment: Like his public statements, in which Portillo has not wanted to comment on his position on hostilities with Iraq but has wanted to appear on the side of the U.S., the letter to President Bush is another attempt by Portillo to have it both ways.
HAMILTON